

and glow pens — among other trinkets, as well as several plastic bags for CITO: Cache In, Trash Out.

"It's another of the traditions with geocaching," Rector explained. "If you come to a cache hidden in the woods or something, and you find garbage, you're expected to clean up some of the garbage before you leave."

He notes that CITO is a good way for geocachers to ingratiate themselves with parks officials; parks are usually favorite hiding and hunting spots for caches, and parks officials generally welcome geocachers because they're willing to clean up trash.

The "Red" in the clue, turned out to be an old red water pump about 70 feet from the tree that contained the cache.

The Wellingtons and the Rectors have small wooden nickels with their names on them — sort of like calling cards — that they leave when they find a cache.

Trade offs

There are a few other guidelines to geocaching. While you are encouraged to take items contained in a cache, you're expected to either trade even or trade up. You're also expected to re-hide the cache after you've found it.

And there are guidelines



HEIDI MURRIN/TRIBUNE-REVIEW

It's a scavenger hunt using the Internet and GPS technology.

for hiding a cache, too: Never leave food in a cache (animals will almost certainly find it), don't bury a cache and don't put anything dangerous, like a gun, into a cache.

O'Connell keeps geocachers in Western Pennsylvania honest. He scrutinizes any cache posted on Geocaching.com in this area for rules violations.

"We don't want it too close to railroad tracks, because that's trespassing, and we don't want them too close to a potential terrorist target, like a courthouse or a federal building," he explained. "That kind of thing could obviously cause problems. Airports obviously are not a good place to hide a cache, either."

World-wide booty

O'Connell got into geocaching in 2002, when his daughter came home from school and announced she wanted to find buried treasure for real.

"I did a Google search for treasure hunts, and up popped geocaching," he said.

Since that time, he's hidden more than 30 caches and found more than 1,500. He plans all his vacations around geocaches — referred to as geotourism.

But even someone with his impressive record has his fair share of DNFs — caches that he "Did Not Find."

"Some people are embarrassed to admit they can't find one, but I think if

you found them all, that would get boring," O'Connell said.

At one time, he got so into it he was the world record holder for most micro-caches found in 24 hours — he found 240 in Nashville, Tenn. Micro-caches usually are either a magnetic key-holder or a film canister with just a log book inside. Usually hidden in urban areas, one of the challenges of a micro-cache is finding it without being noticed.

"It's also a great way to lead people to something else you want to show them," O'Connell explained.

He has micro-caches hidden at both the West End overlook and the viewing area atop Mt. Washington. "People are really impressed with the view, which is the whole reason for bringing them up there."

O'Connell acknowledged that some may view geocachers as geeks with gadgets.

But he says the physical demands of some of the hunts rule out the faint of heart.

"Climbing the Cascade Mountains and bushwhack- ing through the woods for 12

miles — unless you've done that, you can't call me a geek," he said.

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Lindsay Pavelka, 23, logs the date and details of her find into the cache log inside Elm Leaf Park.